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ABSTRACT

The concepts and procedures used in two skill development laboratories for college students are introduced. The materials describe the interviewing skills lab that teaches a variety of interpersonal skills used in one-on-one helping relationships, and the group skills lab that provides practical training in the basic skills of leading, conducting, and participating in groups. The laboratory concept is presented as a strategy to develop training opportunities with other interpersonal skills appropriate to most working relationships. The two-hour lab format is delineated and evaluation procedures are discussed. An outline of skills taught in the group skills lab and a brief description of skills taught in the interviewing skills lab are also included. (JAC)

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INTERVIEWING AND GROUP SKILLS TRAINING IN A LABORATORY SETTING

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INTERVIEWING AND GROUP SKILLS TRAINING IN A LABORATORY SETTING

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The ability to relate effectively with others is one of the most rewarding and productive qualities an individual can possess. Students at Brigham Young University have the opportunity to improve and enrich their interpersonal skills through a variety of skill building programs in the Interpersonal Relations Center. One of the more successfully functioning programs helps students develop both individual and group helping skills in a laboratory setting.

An interviewing skills lab teaches a variety of interpersonal skills used in one-on-one helping relationships, and a group skills lab provides practical training in the basic skills of leading, conducting and participating in groups. The intent of this paper is to introduce the concepts and procedures used in these two skill development laboratories, and to show how this laboratory concept is being used to develop training opportunities with other interpersonal skills.

Skills

The interviewing and group skill laboratories have been designed to teach skills which are generally appropriate to most helping or working relationships. The number of skills taught is limited so that they can be learned well. The labs attempt to remain independent of specific therapy orientations by teaching a few generic skills common to most effective individual and group interactions. The intent is that this would allow

students to have an available repertoire of skills which are necessary to implement specific theories taught within the students' academic departments.

Interviewing skills. Six basic skills are taught within the interviewing skills lab. These include the skills of empathy, owning feelings, concreteness, confrontation, immediacy and reassurance (see Appendix A for definitions of each skill).

Group skills. The skills taught within the group skills lab are those necessary for starting a group, observing behavior in a group, accomplishing group tasks, maintaining helpful group relationships, meeting important personal needs within a group, managing dysfunctional group behavior and terminating a group (see Appendix B for an outline of the group skills taught).

Process

The skill labs are designed to meet for two hours once each week over 11 or 12 weeks. This mechanical format can be adapted easily, however, if circumstances require such.

Homework is limited to practicing skills outside the lab and reading limited material in preparation for each day's activites or exercises. Major homework assignments are given through the students' classes which require participation in the lab.

The intent of the skill labs is to teach more than a knowledge of the respective skills. Since the emphasis within the labs is on skills training, participants learn the skills by doing. To facilitate such learning in an orderly progression, students engage in the following

processes for each skill: definition, recognition, demonstration, appropriateness, integration and application.

Definition. Students define the particular skill in written and/or verbal form.

Recognition. Students recognize and discriminate between each skill using written exercises, audio or video recordings, or live interactions.

Demonstration. Students demonstrate each skill through written or verbal responses to uniform statements and/or through live interaction.

Appropriateness. Students demonstrate and discriminate between appropriate or inappropriate use of each skill.

Integration. Students integrate and use all the skills for a particular lab within the appropriate context and relationship to each other.

Application. Students generalize skill usage from the lab to everyday and/or professional life.

Evaluation

The procedures used to evaluate students' skill development within the interviewing and group skill labs are comparable with some differences which recognize that the two labs involve somewhat different processes (e.g., responses to one versus several other individuals).

In general, participants in both labs complete written and performance tests which assess their ability to define, recognize and demonstrate the appropriate and integrated use of the respective skills.

Written tests within the two labs are comparable except for their skill content. Recognition tests involve recognition of skills from

written statements and videotaped interactions.

Performance tests within the two labs are somewhat different. The interviewing skill lab requires demonstration and integration of all six skills during a six minute videotaped interaction with a "coached" client. The group skills lab requires demonstration and integration of all the group skills during a videotaped group interaction.

Relationship to Academic Departments

The skills training offered by the interviewing and group skill labs is viewed as an essential supplement to the theories about helping relations, groups and group procedures taught by a number of academic departments at Brigham Young University. Because of the importance of maintaining a close relationship between theory instruction and skill training, cooperative arrangements have been made between interested departments and the Interpersonal Relations Center.

The academic departments and the office of Student Life jointly cosponsor the Interpersonal Relations Center and the skill laboratories operated within the Center. The academic departments provide student participants and instructors for the skill labs and the Interpersonal Relations Center provides facilities, training materials, faculty supervision and other mechanical assistance (e.g., scheduling, equipment, etc.)

Where do students come from? Students who attend the skill labs are both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in related theory classes from cooperating departments. Students are taught the theory about helping relationships, groups and group procedures in their academic classes and are required to attend the skill labs to learn

and practice the associated skills.

Departments (and classes) requiring lab participation include: Business Management (Financial and Estate Planning); Child Development and Family Relations (Basic Skills In Marriage and Family Therapy; Marriage and Family Group Therapy); Educational Psychology (Introduction to Disorders of Human Communication; Helping Relationships; Group Techniques for Counselors); Social Work (Introduction to Individual Social Services; Introduction to Group Social Services).

In any given semester approximately 300 to 400 students enroll in skill laboratories.

Where do instructors come from? The instructors of the interviewing and group skill labs are students provided by the departments which require students to participate in the labs. The departments provide a 1/4 FTE student instructor for every 45 students required to attend the skill labs. Departments may elect to pay the student instructors, give them credit for teaching (e.g., practicum, cooperative education, etc.) or have them volunteer as instructors for the experience.

The Interpersonal Relations Center selects the instructors from those suggested by the contributing departments. Qualifications for working as an instructor include previous completion of the skill lab (and related evaluations) at a high level, good academic standing and recommendations by the academic department.

Student instructors receive continual in-service training within the Interpersonal Relations Center during the period of their involvement with the skill labs.

Where do training materials come from? Virtually all training materials used within the skill labs have been developed by faculty assigned to the Interpersonal Relations Center.

The interviewing skills lab uses Helping Relationships (see reference, Appendix A) as the basic training manual. It is currently being revised into a separate instructor's training manual and student workbook. All students attending the lab are required to purchase a copy of the basic manual for use throughout the semester. Brief videotape vignettes which demonstrate the appropriate use of each of the six interviewing skills are also used within this lab.

The group skills lab uses the Group Skills Training Manual for instructors and Group Skills Workbook for students (see reference, Appendix B). All students attending the lab are required to purchase a copy of the workbook for use throughout the semester. Brief videotapes of different group interactions are used to teach the observational model and complete the "recognition" exercises.

Future Plans

The Interpersonal Relations Center is currently in the process of developing three additional skill laboratories. These labs will focus on providing practical training in relationship, team building and leadership skills respectively.

Concurrent with the development of these three new labs is the writing of an instructor's training manual and a student workbook for each lab.

The intent behind such offerings as the skill labs described in this paper is to give students an opportunity early in their academic training to develop practical skills as well as knowledge about theories -- to know "how" as well as "why".

APPENDIX A

Brief Definitions of Skills Taught In the Interviewing Skills Lab*

1. Empathy: Listening for the content and feelings of another individual's expressions and communicating these back to the other in a manner which shows understanding, caring and non-judgmental acceptance.
2. Owning Feelings: Acknowledging, describing and taking responsibility for one's own feelings by sending "I" messages.
3. Concreteness: Helping others clarify their meaning by being more specific or avoiding generalizations when describing their feelings, problems, etc.
4. Confrontation: Giving feedback to others about inconsistencies, contradictions or errors in their verbalizations, perceptions, behaviors, etc.
5. Immediacy: Focusing on the here and now in the relationship by exploring the behaviors, attitudes, emotions and ideas occuring during the interaction.
6. Reassurance. Showing genuine support, respect and encouragement.

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*Adapted from Jensen, V. H. Helping relationships. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1977.

APPENDIX B

Outline of Skills Taught In Group Skills Lab*

Module 1: Starting a Group
- A. Making introductions and managing initial anxieties
- B. Clarifying expectations, objectives and goals
- C. Deciding on group procedures (e.g., time, place, frequency)
- D. Getting specific commitments from the group

Module 2: Observing and Identifying Task, Maintenance and Self Behaviors
- A. Learning to observe and identify behavior in a group
- B. Identifying task, maintenance and self behaviors
- C. Distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional behaviors

Module 3: Using and Encouraging Effective Task Behaviors
- A. Identifying the task and progress toward the task of a group
- B. Initiating tasks
- C. Intervening to redirect a group which has deviated or which should deviate from its task
- D. Developing task skills in a group setting (e.g., clarifying, giving and asking for information, summarizing, problem solving, role-playing, etc.)

Module 4: Using and Encouraging Effective Maintenance and Self Behaviors
- A. Identifying maintenance and self behaviors
- B. Using maintenance and self skills in a group setting (e.g., managing conflicts, involving others, giving and asking for feedback, engaging in self-exploration, processing or debriefing experiences, etc.)

Module 5: Dealing with Dysfunctional Group Behaviors
- A. Identifying dysfunctional individual and group behaviors
- B. Recognizing reasons for dysfunctional behaviors
- C. Countering dysfunctional behaviors, (e.g., overt labeling and resolving of dysfunctional behaviors, reestablishing group focus, etc.)

Module 6: Practice Implementing all Group Skills
- A. Organizing personal learnings acquired during the Lab
- B. Using all skills taught in the Lab in a group experience
- C. Evaluating student skill development

Module 7: Terminating a Group
- A. Reviewing and evaluating progress toward individual and group goals
- B. Dealing with feelings associated with a group's terminating
- C. Planning application for newly developed skills
- D. Saying good-bye

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*From Heaps, R. A., Miller, D. A., & Musick, R. J. Group skills training manual. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980. (Also, Heaps, R. A. Group skills workbook. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980)